# The Age of the New Persuaders

**by Mr. Timothy L. Thomas**
**Foreign Military Studies Office, Fort Leavenworth, KS.**

**"Who was most responsible for U.S. involvement in Somalia: President Clinton, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or Ted Turner's news agency?"**

Peacekeeping operations, low intensity conflicts, and terrorism are challenges confronting armies and governmental agencies in many areas of the world. One of the most overlooked and amorphous manifestations of the international instability associated with these phenomena, enhanced by the information age, is the overt and covert manipulation of events and actions that instigate searchs to find out "who's who" or "who did what to whom." Taking advantage of a variety of factors such as the operating techniques and procedures of organizations, personnel involved in these endeavors have used manipulation to augment their operations and subsequent successes.

Often, the rationale or sources behind these actions are soon forgotten. The answer posed to the opening question about Somalia is "None of the above." Former President Bush was in charge at the start of the involvement, and non-governmental agencies (NGOs) were initially responsible for drawing the attention of CNN and the U.S. President to the situation there.

The innocent victims of manipulation activities can include responsible decision-makers around the world who are persuaded by media coverage of events influencing public opinion and motivating demands for prudent legislative action/assistance. All nations, it seems, become practioners of manipulation techniques as well. Everyone is involved in this old art to some degree.

For the purposes of this article, manipulation is defined as

> the desired result of a process that utilizes specific devices (semantic, technical, psychological, behavioral, etc.) to deceive, misinform, influence, persuade, or control an object, either concrete (a person, state, or action) or abstract (thinking, perceptions, etc.), usually to gain one an advantage.[1]

Just who are the "new persuaders?"[2] They may be computer hackers, animation or forgery specialists aligned with criminals and terrorists, specially programmed computer displays, journalists taken with interpretive reporting,[3] and a host of other people or things. They can also still be intelligence services armed with these tools. Lower costs and more broadly available technology has made the entry price into this business less costly. Rapid technological change and renewed international instability offer these persuaders many new and potentially harmful opportunities to manipulate objects. Minor tactical or devastating strategic consequences may be the result.

A manipulation can be intentional or unintentional, transparent or hidden. For example, the ability of technicians to produce morphed images and movie magic means "seeing is believing" no longer applies. Fooled in the past by doctored photos, people now can be easily duped by well-staged images even on the battlefield, all the more so if holograms become a tool of psychological operations (PSYOP) units. Thus, the time is opportune to reconsider how manipulation should be understood, how such operations can be uncovered and managed, and why attention and resources must be devoted to them by decision-makers and society. The discriminate observer must be capable of discerning between an intentional manipulation and simply having one's emotions or logic persuaded or influenced in a certain direction. The seriousness of the issue was brought home during the Russian election of June 1996.

One of the contenders for the Russian Presidency this past June, Gennadiy Zuganov, the Communist candidate, charged that the mass media had manipulated constituents into voting for President Yeltsin. His primary claim was about the number of hours that went to pro-Yeltsin and anti-communist programing on state and private networks. After the election, some journalists admitted to knowingly being manipulated or bought. Zuganov consequently branded the mass media as a fourth estate or information weapon. He recommended that "information" acquire a place as an autonomous branch of power in addition to the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. In his words, it was necessary to introduce into legislation "norms prohibiting the mass media's use as a weapon for conducting psychological information warfare inside the country."[4] He recommended similar norms for international law.

Manipulation, from this perspective, could be branded a "tool of warfare." However, before undertaking a closer examination of manipulation and why it is evolving into a serious threat, a look at a practical application is in order.

## Examples of the phenomena: Manipulation in Bosnia

General Lewis MacKensie, writing about his experiences as head of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) contingent in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992, observed that "perception is often more persuasive than reality."[5] This included an obsession not only with impartiality, but the perception of impartiality. He was confronted with a multitude of incidents in which one side in the conflict attempted or succeeded in manipulating world opinion against another side, often at the expense of the UNPROFOR itself. Both sides took any opportunity to manipulate the conduct of a peacekeeper to their advantage. MacKensie's force had no weapons in many cases, and could not fire unless fired upon or threatened. The antagonists, knowing that

these were his forces' rules of engagement, worked to manipulate this fact to their advantage, sometimes through threats of the use of force and sometimes through hostage taking.[6]

From MacKensie's experience, the combatants manipulated news coverage, convoy assistance, mortar and other armed attacks, cease-fires, the rules of engagement, and the statements, actions and presence of the UNPROFOR. Disinformation, deception, perception management, or PSYOP were means utilized to manipulate international mediators and the opposing side into some action or decision. Examples included the following:

*News coverage*- General MacKensie noted that on one occasion the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) had several trucks missing. The trucks eventually arrived a few hours late, having been detained at roadblocks along the way. The staff of Bosnian Defense Minister Doko seized on the report that the trucks were missing and, not knowing they had arrived, informed the *New York Times* that the trucks had transported Serbian soldiers, giving them freedom of movement (since they were in UN protected trucks, which would violate the principle of impartiality by helping one side). When confronted by MacKenzie and informed that the trucks had already arrived, Doko apologized and said he had been given bad information. Regardless, the media and world opinion had already been manipulated.[7]

MacKensie also used the media to his advantage. Once, when he was told that his men would be under heavy artillery fire if they did not move, he responded that he was telling them to get in bunkers and cellars at their present location, and that he would call every TV station in the world and tell them one side was attacking the UN if artillery shells began to fall.[8]

*Convoy assistance versus ethnic cleansing*- in one instance, a U.N. observer was confronted by more than a hundred non-Serbs who were leaving a UN protected area because they feared for their lives if they remained. Unable to talk the group into staying, the UN observer escorted them through a mine-field on its way out of the area. The next day the Croatian press accused the UN of "assisting the Serbs with ethnic cleansing" by marching refugees through a minefield and out of an area.[9]

*Mortar attacks*- on 27 May, 1992 people lined up for bread in the Sarajevo market place, as they had done for years. A mortar attack ensued, and 17 people died. The Bosnian presidency said the Serbs did it, but a number of facts did not make sense. The possibility existed that stories and reports had been manipulated to make it look like one side did it. As MacKensie noted:

> Our people tell us there were a number of things that didn't fit. The street had been blocked off just before the incident. Once the crowd was let in and lined up, the media appeared but kept their distance. The attack took place and the media were immediately on the scene. The majority of the people killed are alleged to be "tame Serbs." Who knows? The only thing for sure is that innocent people were killed.[10]

To this day, the strong suspicion remains that the Bosnians were indirectly responsible for the attack.

*Cease fires*- anytime there was a chance that a cease fire would freeze the status quo on the ground, parties to the conflict would launch a last minute offensive to gain what territory they could before the cease fire began.[11] Then they would manipulate the cease fire by repositioning and resupplying their forces during the lull in the action.[12]

Clearly, manipulation was used in each of these vignettes. Some occurred with prior planning, some without, and these are only a select few from among hundreds of examples. What is manipulation, and how are we to discern between it and the other concepts used to persuade someone, such as perception management, PSYOP, deception, or disinformation?

## What is manipulation?

Manipulation is not defined by the Department of Defense (DOD) dictionary of terms, nor by Field Manual 33-1, *Psychological Operations*. The American Heritage dictionary defines manipulation as "shrewd or devious management, especially for one's own advantage". For this study, as noted above, manipulation is defined as

> the desired goal or result of a process that utilizes specific devices (semantic, technical, psychological, behavioral, etc.) to deceive, misinform, influence, persuade, or control an object, either concrete (a person, state, or action) or abstract (thinking, perceptions, etc.), usually to gain one an advantage.

This definition shares many of the characteristics of the American Heritage definition. Most important, manipulation is the end result of a process (deception, disinformation, etc.) that exploits people, thinking, or capabilities. It does this by affecting the prism through which an individual's values, stereotypes, or interests are processed. A person or state does not have to be the primary agent initially manipulated. Most often, the person or state responds to something (information, an incident, or some other outside stimulus) which subsequently affects their decision-making processes or perceptions. For some countries, manipulation even involves attempts to influence or persuade one's own attitudes and opinions, or those of an alliance of which it is a member. For example, attempts to get an ally's population to see a threat by building up the image of an opponent as a ruthless enemy or threat would fall into this category.

Americans tend to overlook the term manipulation when assessing their own system, associating the term with foreign propaganda methods. Yet it is prevalent everywhere in our society, especially in advertising where companies try to persuade or manipulate you into buying their product. Manipulation even extends to the efforts of White House personnel to shape the President's image, and garner your vote. *Time* magazine's interesting article on the "Morris Method" (a reference to Presidential political consultant Dick Morris) portrayed a process in the form of a game to create a family-friendly policy to redefine the way Americans perceive President Clinton. The method included constituent previews of the script and images to provide feedback, which the military's PSYOP personnel would call the pre-test phase of the plan.[13] Methods similar to those of Dick Morris have been used by presidents for many years.

Today, increasingly sophisticated states and people try to exploit advantages (whether in technology, tactical situations, or openings offered by negotiations), indicating that the dictionary

definition of "shrewd or devious management, especially for one's own advantage" still holds true. The threat of manipulation is intensified by today's unstable environment promoted by changes in ruling elites and in missions for international organizations, two bedrocks of any stable system. Causes based on historical claims or religious beliefs, among other reasons, are also factors. Conflict combatants, taking advantage of this instability, have manipulated events and actions in Bosnia's U.N. operation, and LIC settings in Somalia and Chechnya with considerable success. Terrorists have manipulated the instability in other ways.

| TERM | DEFINITION | INTENT |
|------|------------|--------|
| Deception | Those measures designed to mislead the enemy *by manipulation*, distortion, or falsification of evidence to induce him to react in a manner prejudicial to his interests.[14] | The action verb here is to mislead, and the goal is to induce a reaction. |
| Perception Management | Actions to convey and/or deny selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, and objective reasoning; and to intelligence systems and leaders at all levels to influence official estimates, ultimately resulting in foreign behaviors and official actions favorable to the originator's objectives. In various ways, perception management combines truth projection, operations security, cover and deception, and psychological operations.[15] | The action verbs in this definition are to "convey/deny information" and to "influence estimates, emotions, motives and reasoning." The goal is to change foreign behavior and official actions favorable to the orginator's objectives. |
| Psychological Operations | Planned operations to convey selected information and indicators to foreign audiences to influence their emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and ultimately the behavior of foreign governments, organizations, groups and individuals. The purpose of psychological operations is to induce or reinforce foreign attitudes and behavior favorable to the originator's objectives.[16] | Again, the action verbs are to "convey information" in order to "influence emotions, motives, objective reasoning, and behavior." The purpose is also the same, to induce or reinforce behavior favorable to the orginator's objectives. |
| Manipulation | the desired goal or result of a process that utilizes specific devices (semantic, technical, psychological, behavioral, etc.) to deceive, misinform, influence, | Manipulation does more than mislead, convey or influence, and does more than try to obtain a result favorable to the initiators |

| | persuade, or control an object, either concrete (a person, state, or action) or abstract (thinking, perceptions, etc.), usually to gain one an advantage. | objectives. It tries to exploit the conveyance or the influencing of actions for the benefit of the manipulator and against the object of the manipulation through devices. |

**Table 1**

Manipulation is the manifestation or end result obtained through persuasion, deception, disinformation, covert actions, propaganda, psychological operations (PSYOP), or perception management operations (for a comparison of some of these terms, see Table One). In Bosnia, low intensity conflict ( LIC) combatants manipulated cease fires by redeploying and resupplying forces. This was not a deception, disinformation, perception management, or PSYOP operation but the end result of using time to one's advantage, the exploitation of an opportunity. In another example, combatants took advantage of inexperienced or news hungry TV and radio broadcast coverage of complicated events and helped them present stories or versions of an event that did not reflect reality. The market square bombing of August 1995 in Sarajevo is a good example. Less than an hour after the event, a Bosnian official, interviewed on CNN, reported that the U.N. had conclusive evidence that the Serbs did the bombing, an event that strongly influenced a decision to conduct a NATO bombing mission against the Serbs. Further investigation revealed that the way the bombing occurred left great doubt as to who may have done it. The media, and the world, had been deeply affected (manipulated?) by the quick coverage of the tragedy.

The problem with today's timely press coverage is that analysis is often offered before all the facts are considered. The competition among news agencies also encourages the tendency to rush news into print and, intentionally or not, manipulates our understanding of events. One informed correspondent recently noted that news over 12 hours old is "pointless", and may as well be three days old for press purposes. According to this logic, immediate coverage is required. Such thinking is dangerous and grossly overestimates the time required to conduct a factual investigation of an event. This implies that not only the mass media but also organizations can manipulate events by rushing to conclusions. This was most recently proven by the intense negative coverage given Richard Jewell over the Atlanta Olympics bombing. The press, operating from police statements, unwittingly applied tremendous societal pressure on Jewell. In fact, the FBI may have inadvertently manipulated the press by offering its own version of events.

Regardless, dangerous consequences can result from the rapid transference of information, consequences never thought out in advance. Jewell's experience was one. In another case, consider what could have happened during the Gulf War if press images were relayed immediately (real time) during the conduct of the coalition ground attack, as many journalists desired. By putting U.S. forces in such a huge fishbowl Sadaam Hussein, who possessed chemical and biological weapons, could have viewed real time results on CNN. As he watched his force quickly fall to the coalition, and heard reporters tell the world that command and control structures were destroyed and the road to Baghdad was open, he may have come to his own "real time" conclusion: if all is lost, then everyone else is losing with me. And he could have authorized the launch of chemical or biological missiles. In a manner of speaking, Hussein could

have been unwittingly manipulated into acting this way due to his personal beliefs and the situation presented to him. Or did the argumentation of this explanation manipulate you, the reader, into this logic? If so, what device was used?

## Manipulation devices

There are specific "manipulation devices" whose effects are enhanced by the information age. These include, among others, technical, informational, semantic, psychological, rhetorical, real time (troop movements, mock ups, etc. designed to deceive), and behavioral devices of manipulation. One of the more interesting discussions of many of these devices was provided by M. E. Gorbachev, a professor writing for the Russian journal *Security*. While discussing manipulation from the viewpoint of business relations, his descriptions are equally applicable to the international relations and military fields as well. His description of informational and psychological devices follow. They were chosen due to the Soviets extensive research in the propaganda and agitation fields during the Cold War which utilized many of these devices:

*informational-* associated with the manipulator's intentional change of the content of communications being reported to the object. Methods to accomplish this include: -- the intentional lie or partial distortion of information, which disinforms; neutral information, where facts are arranged in such a way as to lead an object to a necessary conclusion; -- a one-sided or subjective explanation of a subject under discussion; --concealing important information, or a delay in reporting it; --reducing information, only alluding to information that may be undesirable to the manipulator while emphasizing desired information in greater detail; --chopping information, presenting it in fragmented form to benefit the manipulator; --offer rumors as axioms or truths, especially if they are unable to elicit doubt and appear to be indisputable; --reduce the criticality of information by overloading the receiver with information; --include self-criticism on unimportant issues to create the appearance of objectivity; --prepare information for the object that can be ascribed to a neutral source whom the object trusts; --leaking supposed confidential information which isn't confidential; --communicating information on behalf of trustworthy sources which in fact isn't the case; -- and using slander to poison the object against another person.

*psychological-* this device turns personality weaknesses to one's advantage, or provokes an individual to lose control. Under the influence of these conditions, the object may make mistakes which can benefit the manipulator. These methods included: --a statement with multiple-meanings, which shows the object much is known about him, but for some special motives is not being revealed; --citing authorities whose opinions cannot serve as evidence of the subject being discussed; --providing unsupportable pledges and promises in advance; --creating an atmosphere of trust, although in reality the manipulator hardly knows the object; --pretense of unity of thinking and closeness in spiritual values and interests; --discredit the person influencing the object and interfering with the manipulator's achievement of his goal; --offering sympathy and support to the object under circumstances that eventually can be turned to the manipulator's advantage. One can use an object's vanity and conceit to advantage. This can be done by flattery and respect, and drawing one's ally into the conversation against the object. The ally can offer mockery, insults, and disinterest to what the object says, and one can then appear to be more reasonable by disagreeing with the ally and agreeing with the object to gain trust.[17]

In addition to psychological and information manipulation, modern states need to focus on technical manipulation, perhaps above all others. Technical manipulation has been used at the highest levels and focuses on computers, the lifeline of the information age. One of the most bizarre yet successful manipulations using a "technical" device may have involved the U.S., according to Alvin Snyder, former director of worldwide television for the U.S. Information Agency during the Reagan years. He produced a film about the shoot down of Korean Airlines Flight (KAL) 007 that was shown in the United Nations. The film was designed to show the world the insensitive and illegal manner in which the Soviets shot down a civilian airliner. Snyder now says that important data was intentionally withheld from him, data that makes it clear he was not provided with information regarding the pilots' conversations with ground elements, the responses of the ground controllers, nor the actions of the fighter pilot. According to new information Snyder has, the pilot fired warning shots and tipped his wings in the international signal to force the plane to land, all which failed to get the crew's attention. As a result, Snyder's film version of the incident based on the selected sound bites provided to him was incorrect. As Snyder noted:

> Using text in Russian, and an English translation, along with a chronology and map of the route, the tape supported the contention that the Soviets wantonly shot down what they knew to be a passenger plane. They fired no warning shots nor gave any signal for the plane to land. The video became a key factor in what Secretary of State George Shultz promised in a memo to President Reagan would be a massive public relations effort "to exploit the incident." The intent was to link the incident to nuclear disarmament issues. Raising concerns about Soviet integrity could do serious damage to the Kremlin's peace campaign to dissuade NATO allies in Europe from placing upgraded American nuclear weapons on their soil.[18]

The film eventually led to the Security Council's condemnation of the Soviet action. Snyder's conclusion was that:

> The video tape was powerful, effective, and wrong...Skilled technicians of today's multiplying forms of information make it easier to reach, and bamboozle, the public instantly...Technology may well spawn disinformation more insidious than any we have yet known. What replaces 1980s-style disinformation in the future may make it seem wholesome by comparison, and the press must be ever more vigilant.[19]

Technical devices thus produced a dramatic manipulation on an international and strategic level. The inability to identify a manipulation at the strategic level could be catastrophic for any nation in both the short and long term, as it could have totally unforeseen consequences. A computer hacker with access can manipulate financial records, credit card listings, and other "data" stored in computers to fit their own interests. In fact, a computer operator in St. Petersburg, Russia hacked his way into the account of Citicorp Bank of America and transferred $10 million before being caught.

Cellular phones, satellite TV, the Internet, and hand held fax machines are some of the new tools or weapons that have energized the manipulation threat, allowing new and faster methods for groups to mobilize public opinion and coordinate actions. The ammunition or bullets are provided by items such as computer viruses, electronic warfare assets, or electromagnetic pulses which can destroy or disable a system, or through disinformation devices. Cutting off the satellite connections that allow many of these tools to operate is hardly an option for dealing with the threat of manipulation either, since these connections are tied to the communication capabilities of major states. Other means to deal with the use of these assets must be developed. Most important of all, the manipulation of events and actions through information age tools is not limited to the battlefield. There are also serious strategic risks as well that will require states to reevaluate their defensive systems.

The U.S. reliance on information devices such as computers and communications systems to run its critical power, finance, and transportation systems represents an especially lucrative and rich technical target group. The manipulation of these assets could divert energy or figures at the design of the manipulator, causing problems that could last for years. As one analyst recently noted in the *Federal Computer Week*, this reliance:

> has created a tunnel of vulnerability previously unrealized in the history of conflict and could have a catastrophic effect on the ability of DOD to fulfill its mission. The report of the Defense Science Board Task Force on Information Warfare-Defense (IW-D), obtained by *Federal Computer Week*, called the threat of an IW attack "significant," adding that the nation's "vulnerabilities are numerous, and the countermeasures are extremely limited..."[20]

There is another, more serious danger in the technical computer-manipulation arena, one which many Americans would ascribe to the pages of the *National Enquirer*. It does not involve semantic, informational, or psychological devices, but focuses instead on devices that affect body processes through a combination of technical and psychological devices. For the most part, this danger has been attributed to the Russian press and Russian scientists. Today, these scientists are studying how the display of information on computer monitors can affect the bodily processes of the computer operator. That is, they are looking for ways to manipulate the operator by affecting his bodily processes through images or commands shown on the screen; or to make him press certain buttons, pass along or destroy certain information, as if he were hypnotized. The Russians are seriously investigating the potential of this phenomena.

There are reports that the Russians have developed "virus 666," which displays certain color and number combinations on a computer screen designed to affect bodily processes. According to a Russian report delivered at a conference in Washington, D.C. on information warfare by a scientist of the renowned Russian Baumann Technical Institute, virus 666 has been responsible for shutting down the bodily functions of more than 50 people, resulting in their deaths.[21]

Can such events occur? Americans are doubtful since there is no proof that computer screens can be used to control or kill people. Most believe such information isn't credible, even though Russian scientists, supported by highly influential people near the leadership of Russia, are the ones responsible for the information. Is virus 666 a manipulation effort on the part of the

Russians to make the U.S. spend money on R & D? Perhaps. Yet in hindsight, man once couldn't comprehend electricity either, and we ought to at least consider the possibility of this phenomena. As the Russians have noted on several occasions, he who makes the first inroads into this area will control the destiny of mankind in the near future.

## Can manipulation really be considered a threat?

Interestingly, the Department of Defense (DOD) dictionary of military terms does not define either the term threat or, as mentioned above, the term manipulation. The American Heritage Dictionary defines a threat as "an indication of impending danger or harm." Thus, a threat does not have to be a person or country (the old concept of enemy). It can be a skill, a competency, an intention, or any other type of dangerous "manifestation." For example, the term "nuclear threat" has for years referred to a capability, not a person or state.

There is an Army definition of the term threat in TRADOC regulation 381-1, where it is defined as "the ability of an enemy to limit, neutralize, or destroy the effectiveness of a current or projected mission organization or item of equipment." This definition focuses on the word enemy which limits it to people, paying no particular attention to the tools an enemy might use.

A manipulation can be an "indicator of impending danger" (especially if a computer system is the object of the manipulation), and it can be an enemy ability to "limit, neutralize, or destroy the effectiveness of a current or projected mission". Therefore, manipulation appears to be a credible threat under this logic.

Yet this is only the beginning. It is not enough to say that our perceptions are being managed, or that a PSYOP, deception or disinformation operation has been uncovered, or that a manipulation operation is a threat. The second step is to ascertain what has been manipulated (the end result), who or what it has affected, and how to rid the system or thinking of the manipulation effort, and then inform the target audience of what has transpired. To say that a propaganda operation has, for example, "influenced" actions, emotions, and events is only the first step. A determination of the goals of the manipulation and an assessment of the damage done must be performed. Evaluating the damage of a manipulation **may be a new mission for PSYOP personnel in the military, or for the U.S. Information Agency on the national level**. Both have personnel who should be trained to deal with this type of threat.

As a result, military staffs and government decision-making agencies need to devote more attention and expertise toward identifying, exposing, and neutralizing manipulation techniques and efforts. This may mean, first of all, realigning the responsibilities in a military staff among psychological operations, the S-3 (operations), and C3I personnel to form manipulation "watch groups" within the staffs. Second, it means having the tools not only to uncover a deception but also to assess the resulting manipulation, examining at what levels or areas it has occurred.

## Conclusions

In the 1930s, the story "War of the Worlds" was read on public radio. While neither a deception nor disinformation operation, it produced sheer panic in many parts of the country. The broadcast

merely exploited the prism and logic of the average citizen through which information was processed, and the means through which he or she received reliable information (radio). It was an unintentional manipulation of the rational thought of the populace. Yellow journalism and jingoism are also old hands as manipulators. One need only recall William Randolph Hearst's comment to a newsman on the quiet situation in Cuba to understand the power of journalists. Hearst noted that "You do the reporting and I'll give you the war."

Often, the simple reporting of facts or their appearance can have such an effect. For the Soviet Union, the U.S. announcement about its plans to proceed with a Star Wars project produced panic among its military--how could they stay up with the evil Americans? In a similar manner, panic would spread among Americans if someone took over the Stock Market's computer system, and told us about it!! Both of these events potentially could produce long term consequences. The Russians are still living with the effects of their military having overspent on systems they didn't need during the Cold War. The Stock Market example would initially produce a run on funds, and may later result in reduced investor confidence in the system. The Stock Market example offers another inviting question as well: if such a problem is detected, is it better to censor the TV reporting to avert a panic while the authorities try to solve the problem? Clearly, manipulation, especially in its technical form, offers many problems for us to plan for and consider.

The idea of a manipulation operation does not, at first glance, stir the blood to action. It is a bland, unexciting, and amorphic threat that doesn't produce loud bangs or devastating physical destruction. Rather, its destruction is directed at the disruption of computer processes, the disruption of logical thought, and the disruption, distortion, or alteration of the context and information data base on which important decisions are made. This results in seemingly endless benign choices. However, many of these choices can produce potentially devastating consequences, as the examples above demonstrate, or sheer panic. Will manipulation be with us as we approach the next century? Most certainly, and it would be foolish to believe otherwise. It will be utilized by many governments all over the globe. In the fight over national interests, every advantage will be exploited as well as all the assets available to produce a favorable outcome.

What are the lessons learned from this encounter with the manipulation phenomena? There are several:

- first, everyone must be more sensitive to the threat of manipulation. When reading an article or a computer message or a leaflet it is extremely important to **understand who and what the source is**, and any motivations behind the report. Sometimes there are built in biases from the publisher (for monetary or ideological reasons), sometimes from the reporter, in societies known for freedom of the press and in those without it. Readers need to be more attuned to this possibility. Articles must be looked at as information first and not as facts.

- second, readers or decision-makers must **consider the context** within which reporting is conducted: is it instantaneous (and if so, one must weigh carefully the information presented until all the facts come in), or is it well-reasoned and thought out? Has the reporter become emotionally attached to the environment in which he or she is working? Even more important for

context is the fact that today the political consciousness of citizens in many parts of the world has advanced far beyond what it was due to what one author has called the "proliferation of information." Entire classes of people once silent have now been drawn into the decision-making process.[22] In turn, if manipulated these people can mobilize groups and assets faster than ever before to support a cause or person.

- third, after considering the source and context of an article, the reader should decide if there has been any attempt to manipulate his thinking. That is, were any of the **devices** listed above utilized. If manipulation is suspected or detected, then the intent of the reporter should be questioned.

- fourth, we must **learn how to neutralize and conduct battlefield assessments of damage** caused by a manipulation. The term "battlefield" is meant to mean primarily a military operation, although it applies equally to a civilian operation.[23] A simple article in a newspaper or journal, a computer manipulation of the stock market, or the manipulation of a computer operated reconnaissance-strike complex all require extensive neutralization and damage control. This will require that government, business, and military staffs allocate more assets and attention toward this area.

The information age is propelling us forward faster than we ever imagined possible. The pentium chips of today soon will become tomorrow's computer dinosaurs. It is creating instantaneous global communications. Offices in Moscow viewed the Gulf War through CNN just as we did in America, or others did in London or Toyko. This creates new opportunities for an old art, "new persuaders" for the information age. Unfortunately, our ability to neutralize the harmful effects or spinoffs of these otherwise useful discoveries, and to comprehend the opportunities offered combatants by the instability in our international system, paralyzes our sensitivity to the phenomena of manipulation operations. We must become more aware of not only what manipulation can do to our understanding of events, but also what we can do to neutralize its affects. We must remain sensitive to it at every opportunity. One should read this article through that prism--to what extent was objectivity demonstrated, have you been manipulated, if so why and what can you do about it. Careful--one can get paranoid with this type of thinking!!

## *Endnotes*

1. Author's definition. No accepted DOD definition was found in the preparation of this article.BACK

2. The title is a modern day adaptation of Vance Packard's famous 1957 novel "The Hidden Persuaders," which discussed the ability of advertising to direct or influence people into certain choices.BACK

3. A recent poll demonstrated that American mistrust of the media is growing. According to the Associated Press report, "a bare majority...says the news media usually get the facts right,' and substantial numbers say journalists are arrogant and cynical." For a rundown of the polls results, see "Poll finds journalists distrusted," Associated Press, *The Kansas City Star*, 4 December, 1996, p. A-12.BACK

4. Gennadiy Zyuganov, "On the Threshold of a Government of Seven Boyars'", *Sovetskaya Rossiya*, 26 October 1996, pp. 1, 2. BACK

5. Lewis MacKenzie, *Peacekeeper*, Harper Collins Publishers Ltd, 1994, p. 275.BACK

6. Ibid., p. 500.BACK

7. Ibid., p. 339.BACK

8. Ibid., p. 331.BACK

9. Ibid., p. 236.BACK

10. Ibid., p 293.BACK

11. Ibid., p. 309.BACK

12. Two final examples, cited after the departure of General MacKensie from Bosnia, offer evidence as to how the combatants further adjusted to their new environment and utilized it to their advantage. First, it was reported that the combatants exploited the presence of a "confrontation line" to their advantage. A confrontation line was one drawn on UNPROFOR maps designating the boundary between the sides. A road in the area might kriss-cross the line several times. The line would be exploited when a UN vehicle, for example, traveled down the road and consequently in and out of the sides of the combatants. A mortar crew from one of the sides would sneak into the territory of the other and fire on the UN vehicle when it entered, making it appear that the "home" side did the shooting.

In a second use of manipulation, there were reports that one of the sides used a third country, with a lot of money, to plant stories in the U.S. press in order to gain sympathy for their cause. This was described in an article by LTC John Sray entitled "Selling the Bosnian Myth to America: Buyer Beware", available on the FMSO home page at WWW: http://leav-www.army.mil/fmso/.BACK

13. Eric Pooley, "Who is Dick Morris?" *Time*, 2 September 1996, p. 29.BACK

14. Field Manual 33-1, p. 8 of the Glossary at the end of the manual.BACK

15. Joint Publication 1-02, p. 304.BACK

16. Joint Publication 1-02, p. 287.BACK

17. All of the information listed for information and psychological devices is taken from M. I. Gorbachev, "Manipulyativnye priemy delovogo obshcheniya," *Bezapasnost'*, Moscow, No 7-12 (23), July-December 1994, pp. 101-104. The author would like to thank Dr. Bernard Orenstein of SHAPE for translating selected pages of this article.BACK

18. Alvin Snyder, "Flight 007: The Rest of the Story," *The Washington Post*, 1 September 1996, p. C2.BACK

19. Ibid.BACK

20. Bob Brewin and Heather Harreld, "U.S. Sitting Duck, DOD Panel Predicts," *Federal Computer Week*, November 11 1996, from internet site httpL//www.fcw.com/pubs/fcw/1111/duck.htm, downloaded 12/03/96.BACK

21. ictor I. Solntsev, "Information War and Some Aspects of a Computer Operator's Defence," paper given to the author at a conference on information war in Washington, D.C., 4-6 September, 1996, p. 7. The incident in question reportedly took place in August 1994.BACK

22. Claudia Kennedy, "The Dimensions of Threat," 1995 manuscript, p. 32.BACK

23. To uncover and foil a computer crime, one Russian recommended the following: form an integrated, interconnected system of measures of a legal and administrative nature aimed at combating this type of crime; organize interaction between public and private structures carrying out practical measures in ensuring security and protection of information processed in electronic form; inform the population about potential consequences of computer crime; bring the mass media into coverage and analysis of crimes in the information sphere; protect the interests and restore the rights of persons, public organizations, institutes, and enterprises that have become victims of computer crime; and expand international cooperation and teamwork in combating computer crime. See Dmitriy Maslennikov, "A Real Danger to Citizens Lives: MVD and FSB Specialists have Drafted a Federal Program Uncovering and Stopping Computer Crime," *Nezavisimoye voyennoye obozreniye*, Supplement to *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (*Independent Military Review*, Supplement to *Independent Newspaper*), no. 13, 11 July 1996, p. 7.BACK